

ORGANIZATION

- ✓ **INVITING INTRODUCTION**
- ✓ **LOGICAL SEQUENCING**
- ✓ **SMOOTH TRANSITIONS**
- ✓ **GOOD PACING**
- ✓ **HIGH POINT**
- ✓ **RESOLUTION**

Organization is the internal structure of a piece of writing, the thread of central meaning, the logical and sometimes intriguing pattern of the ideas.

ORGANIZATION

- ▶ Inviting introduction gets you started & then allows the writer to drive from there
- ▶ Thoughtful transitions link key points & ideas
- ▶ Sequencing is logical, purposeful, and effective
- ▶ Pacing-speeding up for wide angle/slowing down for close-ups-is under control
- ▶ Conclusion wraps it all up and leaves you thinking...

KEY QUESTION:

Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make it easier to understand? Or does it overpower the ideas like too much perfume in a crowded elevator?

ORGANIZATION

I look back and forth and see potential endings and titles and leads. I'm looking for a trail through the material I have...

-Donald Murray

Without a clear trail, your ideas collapse or crash into each other. It is the organization that gives your writing direction and it helps the reader move through the ideas in a purposeful way.

Begin with a strong lead so you hook the reader right off the bat. Don't settle for "Once upon a time" or "My paper is all about dogs." Think about your lead working like a fishing lure or fly that dangles right in front of the nose of the fish until it just can't resist and takes a big, committed bite. Ahhh, gottcha!

If you take a look at your whole piece of writing, it should carefully build to the most important moment or point you are trying to make. Toss your reader interesting details that work like stepping stones—each getting the reader closer and closer to the key idea or event.

The order of your details is really important, too. Ideas shouldn't dive-bomb the reader out of the blue; they should come at just the right time to help the reader understand. Everything needs to fit together with a strong connecting line back to the main idea.

Watch out for getting bogged down in trivial details (what color the hero's socks were, or whether she had milk on her cereal). Keep moving right along. And when you reach the end of the story or make your last point, STOP! Make that last sentence count by leaving the reader with something to think about. Gook endings are tough, but don't fall into the pit with "And I woke up and it was only a dream," or "now you know the three reasons why Americans should car pool." Readers won't feel satisfied with these endings and neither will you.

ORGANIZATION IS THE HARDEST TRAIT.

--K-12 STUDENT WRITERS ACROSS AMERICA

ORGANIZATION

- An inviting introduction
- Thoughtful transitions
- Logical sequencing
- Pacing is under control
- A satisfying conclusion

ENDINGS THAT LEAVE YOU THINKING...

- ▶ Life is like that. What you don't have always seems to be the thing you want.
- ▶ Above all, I show [my grandfather] that I love him and care what happens to him. This is the most important thing to remember when caring for the elderly, especially if you are related to them. They need your love, and even if you don't want to admit it, you need theirs.
- ▶ So Zeena-you can keep popping those marshmallows into your mouth, but remember-not everything about chocolate covered marshmallows is sweet.
- ▶ All and all Billy Bafford was the most stinky, nose picking, ugly, red headed, big eared, loud-mouthed bully you could ever dream. I should know, He was my best friend.



TRAIT: ORGANIZATION

RATING OF 5 (STRONG): The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation is compelling and moves the reader through the text.

- Details seem to fit where they're placed; sequencing is logical and effective.
- An inviting introduction draws the reader in and a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of resolution.
- Pacing is very well controlled; the writer delivers needed information at just the right moment, then moves on.
- Transitions are smooth and weave the separate threads of meaning into one cohesive whole.
- Organization flows so smoothly the reader hardly thinks about it.

RATING OF 3 (DEVELOPING): The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader from point to point without undue confusion.

- The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation; the conclusion may not leave the reader with a satisfying sense of resolution.
- Sequencing is usually logical. It may sometimes be too obvious, or otherwise ineffective.
- Pacing is fairly well controlled, though the writer sometimes spurts ahead too quickly or spends too much time on the obvious.
- Transitions often work well; at times though, connections between ideas are fuzzy or call for inferences.
- Despite a few problems, the organization does not seriously get in the way of the main point or story line.

RATING OF 1 (BEGINNING): The writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details or events seem strung together in a random, haphazard fashion-or else there is no identifiable internal structure at all. More than one of the following problems is likely to be evident:

- The writer has not yet drafted a real lead or conclusion.
- Transitions are not yet clearly defined; connections between ideas seem confusing or incomplete.
- Sequencing, if it exists, needs work.
- Pacing feels awkward, with lots of time spent on minor details or big, hard-to-follow leaps from point to point.
- Lack of organization makes it hard for the reader to get a grip on the main point or story line.

ORGANIZATION

5 The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.

- An inviting introduction draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.
- Thoughtful transitions clearly show how ideas connect.
- Details seem to fit where they're placed; sequencing is logical and effective.
- Pacing is well controlled; the writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on.
- Organization flows so smoothly the reader hardly thinks about it; the choice of structure matches the purpose and audience.

3 The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.

- The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation; the conclusion may not tie up all loose ends.
- Transitions often work well; at other times, connections between ideas are fuzzy.
- Sequencing shows some logic, but not under control enough that it consistently supports the ideas. In fact, sometimes it is so predictable and rehearsed that the structure takes attention away from the content.
- Pacing is fairly well controlled, though the writer sometimes lunges ahead too quickly or spends too much time on details that do not matter.
- The organization sometimes supports the main point or storyline; at other times, the reader feels an urge to slip in a transition or move things around.

1 The writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion: there is no identifiable internal structure. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:

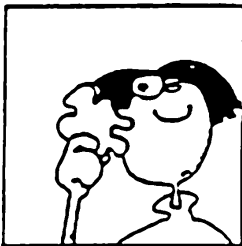
- There is no real lead to set up what follows, no real conclusion to wrap things up.
- Connections between ideas are confusing or not even present.
- Sequencing needs work.
- Pacing feels awkward; the writer slows to a crawl when the reader wants to get on with it, and vice versa.
- Problems with organization make it hard for the reader to get a grip on the main point or story line.



ORGANIZATION

5 PAPER- CLEAR AND COMPELLING DIRECTION

I've chosen an order that works well and makes the reader want to find out what's coming next.



- ▶ My beginning gets the reader's attention and gives clues about what is coming.
- ▶ Every detail adds a little more to the main idea or story.
- ▶ All my details are in the right place; everything fits like a puzzle.
- ▶ I ended at a good spot and didn't drag on too long. I left my reader with something to think about.

3 PAPER-SOME REALLY SMOOTH PARTS, OTHERS NEED WORK

The order of my story/paper makes sense most of the time.

- ▶ I have a beginning, but it really doesn't grab you or give clues about what is coming.
- ▶ Sometimes it is not clear how the details I have used connect to the main idea or story.
- ▶ Some of my details are in the right spot, but some should come earlier or later.
- ▶ I've lingered too long in some places, and sped through others.
- ▶ I have a conclusion, it just isn't the way I want it yet. I may have gone on too long or just tried to sum up in a ho hum way.

1 PAPER-NOT SHAPED YET

The order in my paper is jumbled and confused. I'm feeling dizzy!

- ▶ There isn't really a beginning or ending to my paper.
- ▶ It just kinda "takes off..."
- ▶ I'm confused about how the details fit with the main idea or story.
- ▶ My ideas seem scrambled, jumbled and disconnected. It's confusing.
- ▶ Conclusion? Oops, I forgot.



ORGANIZATION

5 CLEAR & COMPELLING DIRECTION MAKES READING A BREEZE.

- My beginning gets you hooked.
- Every detail is in the right place.
- You won't feel lost.
- My paper ends at just the right spot-& it leaves you thinking.

3 YOU CAN FOLLOW IT PRETTY WELL.

- I have a beginning.
- Most details fit where I put them.
- The paper has an ending, but it needs some work.

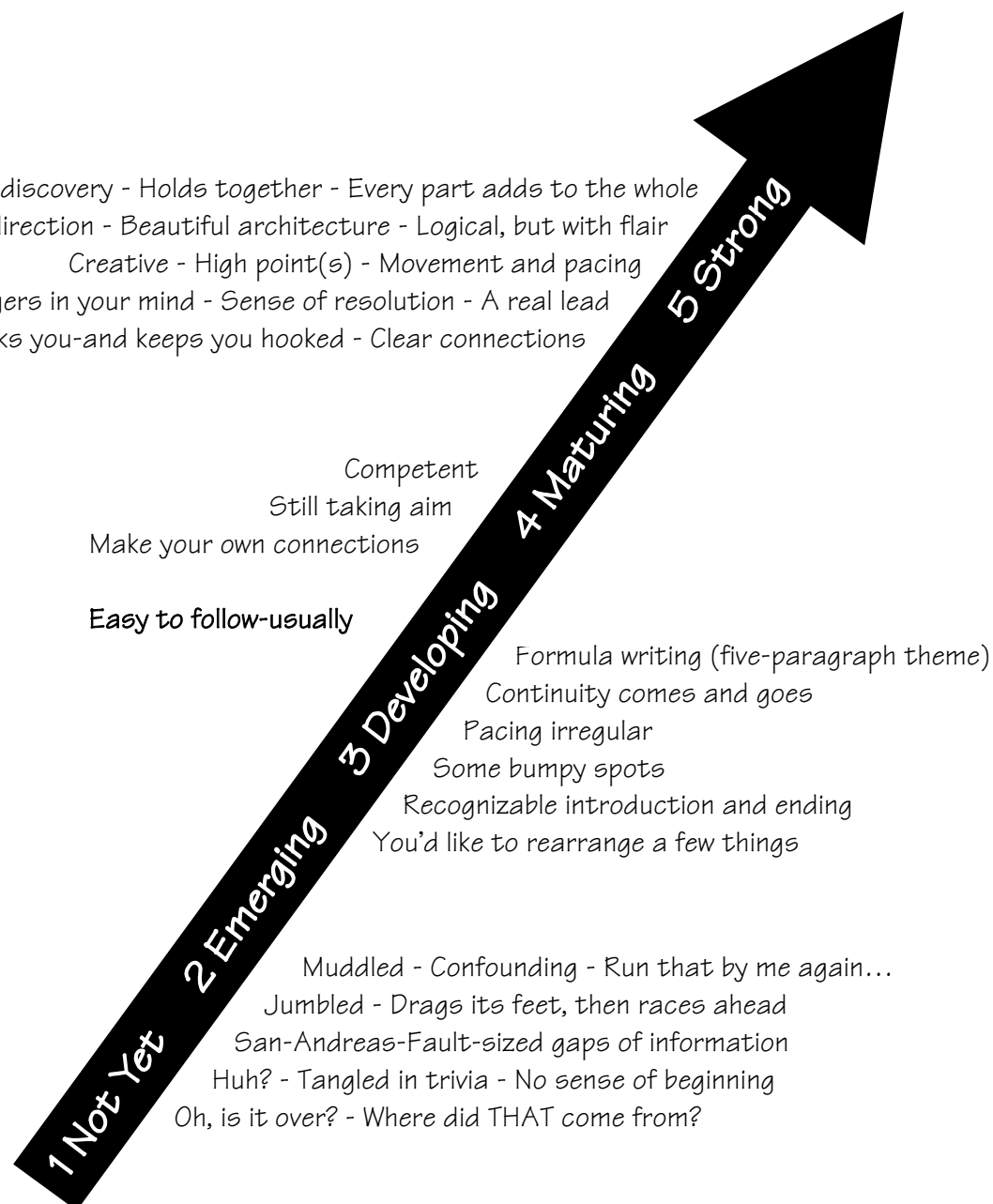
1 WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

- You could get dizzy trying to follow this.
- Beginning? Oops...
- My ideas seem scrambled, jumbled, confusing-even to me.
- It doesn't have a real ending. It just stops.

ORGANIZATION

-THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE-

Journey of discovery - Holds together - Every part adds to the whole
Purpose and direction - Beautiful architecture - Logical, but with flair
Creative - High point(s) - Movement and pacing
The ending lingers in your mind - Sense of resolution - A real lead
Hooks you-and keeps you hooked - Clear connections



ORGANIZATION IN CONTEXT

Organization is like the floor plan of a house—nobody notices it unless it's really bad. And while most kids eventually learn how to tell a story from beginning to end without breaking any building codes, few go much farther than that. And that's a pity because there's so much farther they can go. For example, even the most traditional research paper topics can be structured in a way that invites the reader into the writer's thinking, and makes her feel right at home.

An interesting lead lets us know this isn't going to be another boring school report.

There's No Place Like Home

On a dark December night in 1776, as he led a barefoot brigade of ragged revolutionaries across the icy Delaware River, George Washington said, "Shift your fat behind, Harry. But slowly or you'll swamp the darn boat." He was talking to General Henry Knox (they called him "Ox" for short). There's a painting of George Washington where he's standing up in a boat scanning the riverbank for Redcoats. I always thought he just wanted a good view. But I guess the reason he was standing was because he didn't have a place to sit down.

A natural and unobtrusive transition pulls the reader gently into the body of the paper.

Finding a seat in his own boat was hardly the worst of General Washington's problems. It was cold and wet and icy, and his men were tired and didn't have warm clothes to wear or even enough food to eat. The Revolutionary War was hard on everyone, but it was hard on Washington most of all because he wanted to be home with his wife and children.

Good use of chronological structure. Sounds natural; not just a bunch of dates in a list.

From 1759, until he was called to fight in 1775, Washington lived with his wife, Martha, and her two children. Washington loved his big farm in Mr. Vernon, Virginia, and although he was one of our country's most brilliant generals, he was really just a farmer at heart. In a letter he wrote to a friend in England, he said, "I can nowhere find such great satisfaction as in working on my plantation." He didn't even want to be President. He said he would feel like a criminal going to his death if he took office. But after everyone voted for him, he felt it was his duty to accept.

Another nice transition brings in more details but always linked to the theme.

Washington was our President for the next 8 years, but during that time he just wanted to get back home. He would spend weekends there whenever he could, and he made sure he got reports on the condition of his farm. He also liked getting letters from his family.

Appropriately personal concluding remarks. Sounds natural; just like a 5th grader.

Then in March of 1797, Washington finally got to go home for good. There were no more wars to fight, and John Adams was going to be President. Washington had been a good President, but he was tired of it. Even his granddaughter noticed how happy he was to be home. In a letter to a friend she wrote, "Grandpa is much pleased with being once more Farmer Washington."

I always used to think of George Washington as a soldier and a politician, and I guess I always will. But he was really just a farmer. He reminds me a little of Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz. All she wanted to do was get back home. And finally the Wizard told her she could just click her red shoes three times and say, "There's no place like home." But George Washington and his men didn't have shoes when they went across the Delaware River. Maybe if they did, history would have turned out completely different.

A Wonderful conclusion wraps everything up and leaves the reader with something to think about.

ORGANIZING A NARRATIVE

Donald Murray

1. List what happened.
2. Get rid of deadwood — events that do not matter.
3. Put other events in order.
4. Fill in the “holes.”
5. Find the MOST SIGNIFICANT moment — the turning point.

BEGIN CLOSE TO THIS POINT!

6. Find the beginning: Where it starts to build.
7. Find the end: Where it wraps up.

MINILESSON:

WOMAN & SPIDER

What's the best way to begin a story about a confrontation between a woman and a spider? What impression do you wish to create in your reader's mind? Remember that a good lead creates a sense of anticipation and also draws your reader in, making him or her want to keep reading. So you think any of these leads works well? Which one is best? Why? Which doesn't work? Why?

After discussing these, try brainstorming some of your own. Then, take a look at Robert Fulghum's original. Your teacher may wish to share the whole story.

Possible leads:

- ▶ Do you like spiders? Some people do and some don't
- ▶ Have you ever run full-force into a sticky spider web? It's a horrid experience, I can tell you!
- ▶ Following is a story about how my neighbor reacted when she ran into a spider web one morning on her way to aerobics class.
- ▶ Spiders! Yuck! The very thought gives me the creeps!!
- ▶ It's dumb to be afraid of spiders, but some people just can't help it, I guess.
- ▶ "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaagh!" yelled my neighbor, as she ran headlong into a giant spider web.

Now-try writing one, two, or three leads of your own. Then, compare what you've written to Robert Fulghum's original:

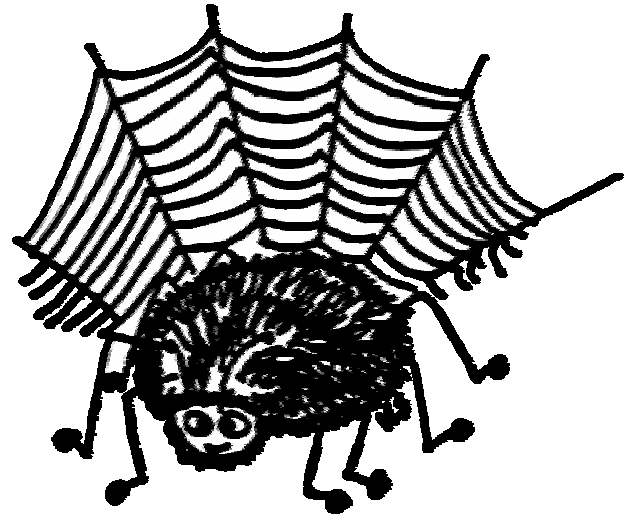
This is my neighbor. Nice lady. Coming out her front door, on her way to work and in her "looking gook" mode. She's locking the door now and picking up her daily luggage: Purse, lunch bag, gym bag for aerobics, and the garbage bucket to take out. She turns, sees me, gives me the big, smiling Hello, takes three steps across her front porch and goes "AAAAAAAAAAAAAGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!" (That's a direct quote.)

Robert Fulghum

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

Ivy Books, 1986, page 13

SOME QUESTIONS



- ▶ Do you like Fulghum's lead?
- ▶ What makes it work?
- ▶ Did you notice that Fulghum doesn't introduce the spider right away? Why do you suppose that is?
- ▶ The neighbor is going about her business, doing all sorts of homely little chores, when suddenly
...AAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHH!!!! Does this work? Why?
- ▶ Is Fulghum's own lead best of all-or do you like one of your own better? Why?
- ▶ Did you use any of the same strategies Fulghum used?

ORGANIZATION

Suppose you were to take a story or essay you'd written and cut it into pieces, on paragraph per piece, then try to put it back together in order. Would it be an easy task? Could someone else readily do it, using only the clues you had embedded in the text? Actually, it should be pretty easy IF the transitions, the connections between ideas, are strong and clear.

That's the point of the first minilesson on organization, based on a fourth grader's narrative, Taylor. You have a two-page copy in which paragraphs have been re-ordered. If you wish, make multiple copies and cut them into strips so that students can work in small groups of two or three, playing with the pieces like puzzle parts till they feel the order is right.

The second minilesson calls for students to brainstorm possible leads to a hilarious story by Robert Fulghum about a confrontation between a spider and a respectable, middle-aged, non-spider-loving woman en route to her aerobics class. You can begin by sharing some possible leads, then having students, in pairs, brainstorm some other (and, with luck, better) possibilities. Wrap it up by sharing Fulghum's own lead—he's a master at beginning stories well.

Surprise yourself 

Don't ever become the prisoner of a preconceived plan. Writing is no respecter of blueprints—it is too subjective a process, too full of surprises.

William Zinsser

"Unity." On Writing Well, Second edition, page 57

MINILESSON:

TAYLOR

Here's an out-of-order version of Taylor, the way you might present it to students. Remember, this lesson is easier (and more fun) if you photocopy the paper and cut it into strips.

Taylor

It was one thirty and I was
not one bit tired.

Finally my brother was born.

At one fifty one am the nurse
came out and showed him to
me, his name was Taylor.

He had on a little blue hat
that could have fit me as a sock.

He grew up so fast and now
he is two and a little bit!

He throws his food at you.

He screams in your ear.

He is going to be a devil
for Halloween good choice!

"Do you want to come with us or
do you want to go to your grandma's?"

My dad asked

"I want to go with you."

I said.

My dad was wearing his cover
ups for the delivery room. he said
"What seems to be the problem here Jessica?"
He He I really was not amused.

We had to go to the hospital
my brother (I didn't know he was a boy
at the time) had to be born.
Why couldn't he be born at two
in the afternoon?

There was nothing on
except Johnny Carson. And
a second grader doesn't appreciate
Johnny Carson.

I went to bed early that night because
I knew I would have to get up early
the the next morning 4:30.
But when my dad woke me up
it was only eleven o'clock.

THE ORIGINAL TAYLOR:

BACK IN ORDER

Here's the original version of Taylor, restored to the proper order. Were you able to guess which paragraph was the lead? Which was the conclusion? Which phrases or transitional ideas in the middle helped you determine the order of things? Did you get stuck? Where? Why?

Taylor: The Author's Original Grade 4

I went to bed early that night because
I knew I would have to get up early
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SIX TRAIT WRITING

WARM-UPS

TRAIT #2: ORGANIZATION

PREPARATION

EXERCISE

FOLLOW-UP

1.	5 or 6 Scene Sequence Cards	Display the cards out of order. Ask the children what's wrong with them and what to do to make them make sense. Have someone put them in order and discuss why that's important.	Talk about the importance of order for understanding
2.	Set of directions for a simple activity (i.e. making a paper airplane) out of order.	Have children read jumbled directions and try to follow them. Ask what's wrong. Ask what can be done to help. Have students put directions in proper order. Ask why order is important.	Talk about importance of order when following directions
3.	A large wall map of a community or individual maps for each student.	Ask students to give directions as to how to get from one point (i.e. school) to another (i.e. store). Ask what will happen if directions are not given in the proper order (illustrate "mistakes" on map).	Talk about importance of order when giving directions
4.	A simple recipe (ingredients – opt) i.e. "how to make a peanut butter sandwich" with vague directions	Have children read the recipe. Discuss how directions could be misunderstood. Opt: Illustrate by making silly sandwiches or have children draw what the sandwich could look like.	Talk about importance of precise directions
5.	Display the following words: before, first, second, third, next, then, last, finally.	Ask students how these words could be used in writing, what kind of writing they could be used in, and why they are important words.	Talk about how to make order understood.
6.	Judith Viorst's "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day".	Read aloud. Ask students what kind of order this was written in. Ask why they think it was written this way. Ask if it would be as amusing written in another way. Discuss why or why not.	Talk about the importance of order in organizing writing.
7.	Several trade books with good beginnings.	Read the beginnings of a few books. Discuss why they think they are or are not good beginnings. Would they want to continue reading? Why or why not?	Talk about the importance of a good beginning.
8.	Several familiar trade books with good endings.	Read the endings of a few familiar books. Discuss why they think they are or are not good endings. How did the endings make them feel?	Talk about the importance of a good ending.
9.	A large map of the school or individual maps for each child.	Have children give you (a visitor) oral directions for getting from your classroom to the gym (or other location). Trace their directions on the map (or have the class walk them) exactly! Did you end up in the right place- or get locked in the janitor's closet?	Talk about the importance of giving directions in the proper sequence.
10.	No preparation.	Have the children give you directions for what to do if you've swallowed a bug. Discuss and decide what you should do first, second, third, etc.?	Talk about the importance of sequence of events.

ORGANIZATION

ANY ACTIVITY THAT ALLOWS STUDENTS TO PRACTICE...

writing a lead that hooks the reader
sequencing in a logical & interesting way
identifying the turning point
connecting ideas to a larger theme
linking ideas together for the reader
setting up a problem-then solving it
crafting a conclusion that ties up loose ends

1. I-SEARCH

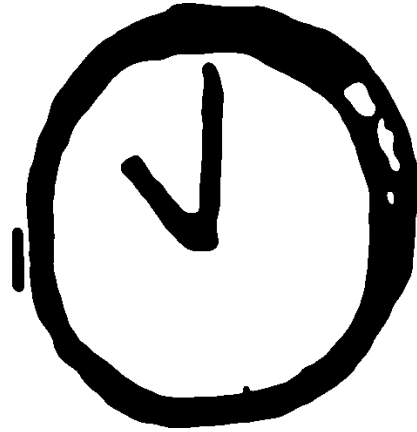
Students use community-based and personal research to explore a topic of genuine interest. They begin by defining what it is they want to know and why the topic is important to them, and include in their research a description of methods used and what they have learned or gained from the experience. The structure of the research format provides an excellent built-in organizer, yet the task is never dry or dull because the students really care about it! The best resource: The I-Search Paper by Ken Macrorie.

2. OUT-OF SEQUENCE

Try reordering a student paper, poem, magazine article, etc., and then asking students to reassemble it in the correct order. This works particularly well if the article is cut into pieces so students (by themselves, in pairs, or in groups) can play with it like a puzzle, moving pieces around to try different versions. Ask them to find the lead first-then the conclusion. How can they spot these things? What are the clues? How do you spot transitions? As a next step, ask students to select a piece of their own work, cut it into pieces by paragraph and ask someone else to put it back together. Is it easy or hard? Ask, why?

3. TEN MINUTES ONLY

Ask students to draft a story that all takes place within a short time frame, such as ten minutes. Every bit of the action must happen within this confined time. As they draft, ask them to look for transitional words, and how to deal effectively with the beginning middle and end. For the students who tend to write on and on or use the dreaded bed-to-bed format (telling EVERYTHING that happened no matter how trivial) without ever getting specific, this is a good antidote.



4. SHARING LEADS

Ask students to share just the leads from their work. As they read them in small groups or in a large circle, other students get an idea of different ways to begin their work. At the end of the activity, make a brainstormed list of different ways to begin writing and what kinds of writing you might use for each technique. Encourage students to try several different leads before settling on the final one. Pull in samples from authors the students know and enjoy as models.

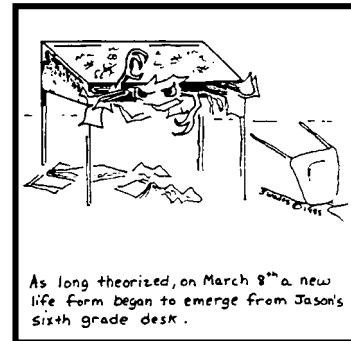
5. SHARING CONCLUSIONS

Coming up with a good conclusion is one of the hardest things for writers of any age to do. Many students don't even have conclusions until the very end of the writing process and because of time, energy, or interest, just slap on the first thing that comes to mind. Try this. Ask students to think of all the ways they or others have concluded their works THAT DON'T WORK. Things like- "I woke up and it was only a dream." Or, "The End." Or, "Now you know the three reasons why everyone should learn to drive a standard transmission." See if you can get the students to tell you WHY these conclusions don't work. Let them help you come up with a list of strategies that make conclusions stronger than the examples above. Now share some rip-snorters out of the literature that are really strong. One of my favorites: Charlotte's Web by E.B. White.

ORGANIZATION

SUPPORTED BY...

- ▶ Learning to write leads that hook the reader
- ▶ Sequencing points or events in a logical/interesting way
- ▶ Getting rid of "deadwood" (unnecessary detail)
- ▶ Identifying the turning point in a story or most important point in an essay
- ▶ Connecting supporting ideas to a larger theme
- ▶ Linking ideas together for the reader
- ▶ Setting up a problem-then solving it
- ▶ Learning to craft conclusions that tie up loose ends



SAMPLE ACTIVITIES...

ANOTHER USE FOR "ORGANIZATION"

It's out of sequence!

Try reordering a story, news article, magazine article, set of directions, or persuasive essay. This activity works best if you actually cut the story or article into pieces so students can play with them like a puzzle, moving things around, trying out different possibilities. When they've got the "puzzle" together, ask, "How did you know which part was the lead? How did you know what came next? How did you recognize the conclusion?" Great for building a sense of beginning and ending, as well as an ear for transitions.

You've got 10 minutes

Ask students to draft a story that takes place entirely within 10 minutes-no more. Great for breaking the bed-to-bed habit of including every detail recordable, whether relevant to the momentum of the story or not!

Hey, we need a lead here...

Give students a short published story or essay with the lead removed. Ask them to brainstorm possibilities, then work alone or with a partner to draft at least five possibilities for leads that might work. Share as many out loud as you have time for, recording those the class likes best. Wrap up by sharing the author's original. Was it what students expected? Do they like it as much as their own?

...and a conclusion, too!

Same idea-only you're working on conclusions this time. Once again, omit the author's original, then come up with possibilities of your own. Compare. Discuss. What makes a good conclusion? Should you be able to predict what the writer will say?

Drop the deadwood

Students writing sometimes suffers from an overload of trivial detail that doesn't matter. You can help them learn to spot deadwood in their own writing by sharing an outline of your own that suffers from this problem. First, tell them a story orally; it should be a dandy, one with some excitement, humor, mystery, and/or a good turning point. Then, show them your written outline for the same story. Be sure to include plenty of extraneous detail, leave out a few good parts, and reorder the rest so it needs some work. Ask students to help you put things in order by (1) deleting the deadwood-details that do not matter, (2) adding important details that were somehow left out, and (3) sequencing the rest to build tension or interest. Then, have them try this same exercise with a story and outline of their own!

Anticipating questions

One of the most effective (and simple) ways to organize an essay is by anticipating four or five key questions your audience might have, then systematically answering them. Encourage students to do this, not only in language arts, but also when writing for math, social studies, science, history, or any content area. Keys to making this work are (1) knowing your audience well enough that you can truly scope out what they might like/need to know, and (2) answering the questions in an order that makes sense and builds interest.

BOOKS THAT ILLUSTRATE STRONG

ORGANIZATION

**ENTICING LEAD
STRONG TRANSITIONS WITH EASY-TO-FOLLOW SEQUENCING
POWERHOUSE CONCLUSION**

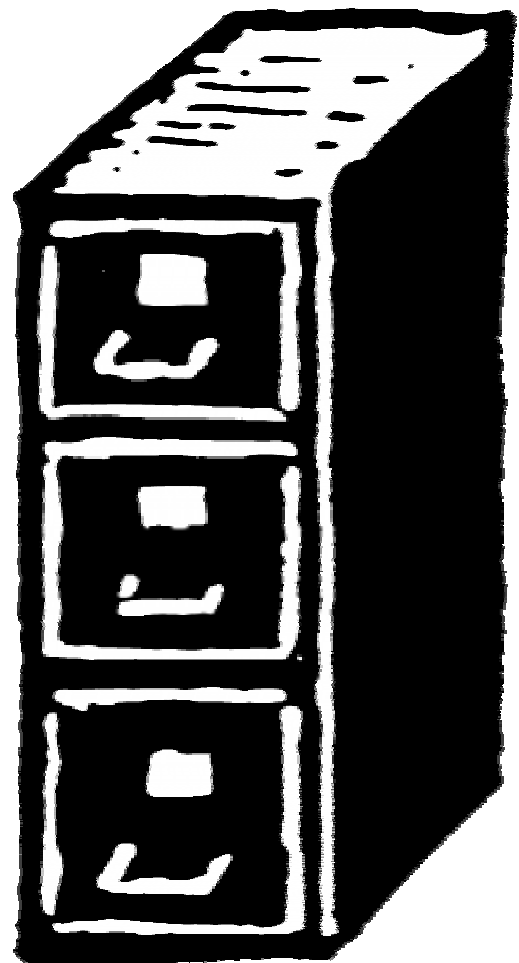
ORGANIZATION...

- ▶ The very first line hooks me.
- ▶ I can follow along without feeling lost.
- ▶ Everything links back to a main idea (or ideas).
- ▶ Sometimes I can predict where we're going; sometimes I'm in for a great surprise.
- ▶ It doesn't just STOP-as if the writer got up to answer the door.
- ▶ It does NOT end with "Then I woke up and it was all a dream."
- ▶ It does NOT end by rehashing old ideas: "Now you know the three reasons why I love baseball so much."

USE PICTURE BOOKS TO TEACH THE TRAIT OF:

ORGANIZATION

- Write the story to a wordless picture book and highlight the lead, transitional words, sequence patterns, and conclusion
- Create a set of the best openings found in picture books
- Create a set of the best conclusions found in picture books
- Write a student-friendly set of guidelines for writing good openings and conclusions, based on what you find in picture books
- Write a new ending to one or more picture books
- Write a new picture book using the A to Z format on a topic from the current curriculum
- Read and discuss the different organizational structures found in a sampling of books



ORGANIZATION

Aunt Isabel Tells a Good One

Big & Little

Black & White

A Chair for My Mother

Charlie Anderson

Chattanooga Sludge

Clown

The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish

The Favershams

The Flag We Love

The Frog Princess

The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher

How to Get Famous in Brooklyn

How to Think Like a Scientist

It Could Always Be Worse

It Was a Dark and Stormy Night

Jack's Tale

Josefina

June 29, 1999

Just Another Day

Kisses From Rosa

The Legend of the Blue Bonnet: An Old Tale of Texas

The Little House: Her Story

Long Live Music

Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch

Mouse Around

My Ol' Man

The Mysteries of Harris Burdick

The Old Dog

Old Henry

Rezoom

Rotten Ralph

The Seasons Sewn

The Seven Silly Eaters

The Snowman

The Tortilla Factory

Tough Boris

Tuesday

Twilight Comes Twice

Two Bad Ants

Under the Sea from A to Z

What do Authors Do?

Zoom

Resource:

Picture Books

**An Annotated Bibliography
With Activities For Teaching
Writing By Ruth Culham**

ORGANIZATION ACTIVITY:

**JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT
IT WAS SAFE TO GO BACK INTO
THE WATER**

SHARKS!

Directions:

- 1.) Read the ten statements on "Sharks" from Building Organizational Skills.
- 2.) Put eight of the statements in order. (Two of them are not used. Tricky! They're the "too obvious" ones.)
- 3.) Number the eight statements in order after you've decided what that will be.
- 4.) Read carefully. There are clues within the text, particularly "transitional" words, to help you. Pay attention to "logical sequencing", also. There's a strong "resolution" at the end.

**THE ANSWER KEY IS ON THE BACK.
NO FAIR PEEKING!**

*Is that how you would have written it?
How would you have changed it?*

*Take a piece of your writing, cut the sentences apart,
and give it to a classmate to organize.*

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS:

SHARKS

It resembles a large wolf trap, equipped with innumerable sharp and gleaming teeth.

When he opens the jaw, the lower jawbone is thrust forward while the snout is drawn back and up until it makes almost a right angle with the axis of his body.

The force of this sawing effect is such that it requires no more than an instant for the shark to tear off a splendid morsel of flesh.

At this moment, the mouth is located forward of the head and no longer beneath it.

It is terrifying and nauseating to watch.

The shark's jaw is located far back beneath his long snout, but this does not prevent him from biting directly into the flesh.

How much do you know about sharks?

The shark plants this mechanism in the body of his victim and uses the weight of his own body in a series of frenzied convulsions, transforming the teeth of the body of his victim.

People fear sharks for many reasons, but find them fascinating too.

DIRECTIONS:

- Put the statements in order.
- What transitional words-clues within the text-help you?

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS:

SHARKS

The shark's jaw is located back beneath his long snout, but this does not prevent him from biting directly into the flesh. When he opens the jaw, the lower jawbone is thrust forward while the snout is drawn back and up, until it makes almost a right angle with the axis of his body. At this moment, the mouth is located forward of the head and no longer beneath it. It resembles a large wolftrap, equipped with innumerable sharp and gleaming teeth. The shark plants this mechanism in the body of his victim and uses the weight of his own body in a series of frenzied convulsions, transforming the teeth of the jawbones into saws. The force of this sawing effect is such that it requires no more than an instant for the shark to tear off a splendid morsel of flesh. When the shark swims off, he has left a deep and perfectly outlined hole in the body of his victim. It is terrifying and nauseating to watch.



ORGANIZATION ACTIVITY

WHERE'S THE BEEF?

Directions:

- 1) There are eight cards, each with a drawing of a "bull", inside the envelope.
- 2.) Organize the cards in the order that you think the artist, Pablo Picasso, drew them in.
- 3.) Clue:
Beware. It may not be as you would "normally" think.
Picasso had some peculiar (creative) ideas about art.

**THE ANSWER KEY IS ON THE BACK.
NO FAIR PEEKING!**

How did you do?

Is that how you would have drawn a bull?

Try your own drawing. Use several steps.
Cut it apart and try it out on a classmate.

